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SPECIAL MEMORANDUM

FOREIGN RADIO AND PRESS TREATMENT
OF SOVIET MILITARY AID TO CUBA

7 SEPTEMBER 1962

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FOREIGN RADIO AND PRESS TREATMENT
OF SOVIET MILITARY AID TO CUBA

Summary

1. Cuban comment on Soviet military aid to the Castro government stresses the defensive nature of the weapons, the right to request such aid in view of the "aggressive" character of U.S. plans, and the fact that Cuba would prefer -- were the situation different -- more agricultural machinery, turbines, and tools instead of military equipment. Cuban comment makes no direct references to missiles or launching sites, but one commentator notes that U.S. rockets have reportedly been sent to Japan, so why should U.S. officials "shout to high heaven" about Soviet arms coming to Cuba?

2. Moscow has given the 2 September Soviet-Cuban communique a moderate amount of publicity, but has by and large let the announcement of the military aid pledge speak for itself. The aid is represented as purely defensive, in the context of voluminous charges that Cuba is threatened with armed intervention under U.S. Government aegis. There is no brandishing of missiles -- in keeping with the propaganda practice since late 1960, when Khrushchev's 9 July 1960 threat to use rockets in the event of an invasion of Cuba was dubbed "symbolic" and diluted into a generalized promise of "necessary help." Thus Soviet commentators continue to speak in generalities of Soviet "help," portraying bloc support for Cuba as a deterrent to aggression. Reportage of economic aid continues to dominate propaganda picturing an increasing Soviet effort to help Cuba stand on its own feet and consolidate its "socialist" gains.

3. Satellite media largely echo the Soviet line, although the East German radio -- characteristically less circumspect than Moscow in brandishing Soviet military prowess -- remarks that the USSR's "global rockets" obviate the need for a military base on Cuban soil. Peking has broadcast the Soviet-Cuban communique, but has focused in its comment on the Chinese people's "militant" support for Cuba rather than on Soviet aid.

4. Noncommunist attention to the subject is spare and scattered. There is virtually none from the Far East and Middle East areas, and monitored comment from West Europe is confined to isolated reaction from a few British newspapers and the Swiss radio. One British newspaper feels that Khrushchev is using military aid to Cuba as a "lever" to force Americans out of Berlin and South Vietnam. A Swiss commentator lauds President Kennedy for "judging the situation calmly," as the Soviet Union would not dare provoke a "military trial of strength" with the United States. Some Latin American countries feel that the OAS should take security measures provided in the Rio de Janeiro treaty.

I. CUBA

Cuban comment concerning military aid from the Soviet Union stresses the defensive nature of the weapons and the right of the Cuban Government to request such assistance in view of U.S. aggressive plans. The threat of invasion has caused Cuba "to turn to the Soviet Union and solicit armaments and the necessary technical help for the training of Cuban military personnel," the Havana radio says, although Cuba "would prefer requesting more agricultural machinery, turbines, and tools instead of military weapons."

Commenting on the 25 August shelling of Cuba by anti-Castro forces, Havana television commentator Kuchilan on 27 August declares that the attack culminated a U.S. campaign to justify invasion of the island. Kuchilan reports President Kennedy's remarks at his 22 August press conference that large quantities of arms and military equipment from the USSR were arriving in Cuba, and says that the U.S. State Department on the following day declared that rockets in Cuba did not have nuclear warheads and were intended only for coastal and antiaircraft defense. On the 29th, Kuchilan reports to viewers that U.S. Senator Young's remarks about "the arrival of so many weapons in Cuba" disregarded the fact "that U.S. State Department notes emphasize that the equipment is for coastal and antiaircraft defense and is obviously for defense against an attack from without."

Reporting a news dispatch that "the U.S. Defense Department has sent Yankee rockets and arms to bases in Japan," the commentator asserts on 5 September that U.S. officials "seem to be authorized to send arms that far, to Japan, but they shout to high heaven because we are also receiving arms for our defense." Kuchilan also reports President Kennedy's statement to congressional leaders that available information "establishes without doubt that the Soviets have given the Cuban Government a certain number of antiaircraft missiles," similar to the Nike, "together with radar and other electronic equipment required for the operation of these missiles," and that the United States "can confirm the presence of several armed torpedo boats carrying ship-to-ship guided missiles with a range of 25 kilometers."

The commentator declares that Mr. Kennedy's "insinuation" that Cuba was going to attack another part of the hemisphere "is stupid because we do not have any ships with which to transport troops to attack anyone." The President's statement that there is no evidence of "ground-to-ground missiles" in Cuba and that the Cuban question is part of the world challenge by communism is reported by Kuchilan, who adds that the President met with congressional leaders "to explain" why he has not heeded "demagogic shouts that Cuba must be invaded because elections are

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approaching." Kuchilan warns against taking Senator Keating's advice "that Soviet ships be stopped and prevented from bringing arms to Cuba," since "there is just a hairsbreadth between this and nuclear war."

Speaking over Havana television on 4 September, commentator Wanguemert asserts: "There is no doubt that the defense preparations made by Cuba and the further preparations that will be made on the basis of the aid requested by our government, a request taken into account by the Soviet Government, will suffice to make an attack on Cuba so costly in lives as to discourage our possible aggressors." He urges listeners to be willing to train and "be better prepared to use the excellent weapons available to us." The following day Wanguemert declares that "President Kennedy was correct" when he evaluated available information as indicating that "the military steps taken by our government are defensive measures."

Havana radio tells North American listeners on 5 September that Cuba has the right and duty "to do business with any country it chooses to do business with," and "is taking steps to meet the danger" of invasion by receiving "defensive" aid.

While Cuban sources make no direct references to missiles or missile sites, Lima AFP transmits a Havana-dated report that "mobile ramps for the launching of tactical rockets were observed" in the vicinity of Havana which are believed to be for "surface-to-air antiaircraft defense missiles, or surface-to-surface tactical missiles with a range of several tens of kilometers." The agency also reports that the anti-Castro Cuban Revolutionary Directorate issued a statement in Mexico City "enumerating the camps, air and naval bases, and installations of ramps for rockets which are in the hands of foreign troops" in Cuba. The statement said the "rocket-launching ramps are near the port of Bahia Honda, Pinar del Rio Province, and near Varadero Beach, Matanzas Province" and are "within range" of Cape Canaveral.

II. THE SINO-SOVIET BLOC

Radio Moscow broadcast the Soviet-Cuban communique of 2 September some 30 times to audiences worldwide -- no more than moderately voluminous publicity for such a document. In followup comment, it has defended the promise of military aid to Cuba as justifiable and "only natural" in the face of U.S. "aggressive provocations," but it has at no time gone beyond the language of the communique in defining the scope of the aid as "armaments and technical specialists to train Cuban servicemen." Moscow has broadcast no authoritative comment -- no central press editorial, for example -- on the military aid question or any other aspect of the Guevara-Aragones mission. And it has at no time brandished Soviet missiles, instead emphasizing Cuba's resolve and capability to defend itself with the "help" of the Soviet Union and the sympathy and solidarity of the "socialist" or "peace-loving" countries.

In keeping with prior propaganda practice, Moscow has thus continued to couch its threats and warnings in oblique generalities. Radio Moscow commentator Vavilov, a frequent recent commentator on Cuban affairs, recalled for Latin American and other foreign audiences on 2 September that the Soviet Union "has warned the United States more than once against the adventurers who call for an invasion of Cuba, pointing out that this could bring extremely dangerous consequences for the cause of peace and to the United States itself." This is about as far as Soviet commentators go. There is no recollection of Khrushchev's 9 July 1960 warning of rocket retaliation in the event of U.S. intervention in Cuba, which was repeated in Soviet propaganda at the time but was very shortly toned down both in official and routine propaganda to generalized pledges that the USSR would give Cuba the "necessary help" in the event of armed intervention. Moscow in late 1960 referred to Khrushchev's warning as "symbolic," and the specific threat to use rockets has never been repeated.

The most extensive and most widely broadcast Moscow commentary defending the current communique's pledge of military aid -- by Vavilov on 4 September, broadcast 14 times to foreign audiences but not to the Soviet people -- cautions that an armed invasion of Cuba "could cause a serious international conflict" but concludes that "the balance of forces in the world is now such that the United States cannot hope to succeed in aggressive plans against Cuba." The same commentator had declared four days earlier, in complaining that "the U.S. leaders have still learned nothing" from the experience at Playa Giron, that "one has to reckon with the mighty socialist community, which is rendering comprehensive support to the peoples who have embarked on the road to freedom and independence." For the more direct threat that "the socialist countries will not allow [U.S.] intervention" the commentator resorted to a quotation from the CHANAIAN TIMES.

Also typical of recent generalized warnings was the statement in a Moscow broadcast of 28 August that another invasion will end in failure because "Cuba does not stand alone. All the world's peace-loving nations are at its side. The people of the revolutionary Cuban Republic will make the efforts required, with the assistance of all progressive mankind, to deal a crushing rebuff to any attacks by the imperialists and colonialists on its freedom and independence."

Concurrently, Moscow has reacted with ridicule and counterattack to statements by U.S. spokesmen and in the U.S. press about Soviet military aid to Cuba. On 1 September, for example, Moscow told Latin American audiences that the U.S. press was trying to prepare the ground for intervention by "alleging" that military personnel were arriving in Cuba from the Soviet Union and "charging" that the Soviet Union was preparing to set up a military base there. The commentator countered that "the thief believes everybody else is dishonest" -- that "everybody knows" it is the United States which has encircled the USSR with military bases and that "the only military base" in Cuba is at Guantanamo.

Following the release of the Soviet-Cuban communique, Moscow said it was not surprising that the Soviet promise of military aid had provoked an "attack of war hysteria among American legislators" who hold the view that "no Latin American state has the right to ... strengthen its defense potential if Washington does not want it to do so." The notion that the Soviet Union has made an aggressive move is ridiculed as the reaction of a "hysterical" U.S. press and a truculent group of senators. And on 5 September, Moscow cites the President's statement that there is no evidence of any organized combat force in Cuba from any Soviet bloc country as evidence that the steps taken by Cuba "are defensive, not offensive."

By far the greatest volume of Moscow's comment on Cuba is devoted to support of Havana's charges that the United States is bent on a new invasion attempt, and in much of this comment there is no direct reference to Soviet or bloc support. Moscow widely seconds Castro's claims that the United States must bear all the responsibility for the shelling of Havana and for other "provocations" in the same "chain" of aggressive preparations. Soviet commentators trace the shelling (called "piratical," "barbarous," and "dastardly") to the "obvious" instigation and connivance of U.S. Government agencies. And they accuse the State Department of "shameless cynicism" in attempting, in the face of "irrefutable facts," to absolve the U.S. Government of blame. A Soviet law professor is cited for the "expert" testimony that in permitting the counterrevolutionaries to use American soil and in "furnishing them with equipment" the United States has violated the most basic rules of international law.

One Moscow commentator capitalized on the exchange at the President's press conference regarding his attitude toward a new invasion, declaring: "The President immediately replied that he did not support the idea of invading Cuba at the present moment, but what about in one month's time or in half a year?" On 5 September Moscow complained that the President took a "threatening tone" in stating that the United States would act to prevent Cuban aggressive action in any part of the Western Hemisphere.

Thus the public announcement of Soviet military assistance to Cuba -- the first specification of Soviet arms and technicians -- appears against the background of voluminous propaganda picturing Cuba as threatened by an "aggressive" United States and as justifiably coming to its friends for help to secure its defenses. Rather than elaborating on the Soviet military aid pledge or brandishing it, Moscow lets it speak for itself in the context of this propaganda. And Soviet media continue to publicize, in considerable detail, reports of Soviet economic aid to Cuba -- fertilizers, cranes, foodstuffs, industrial equipment -- as part of a continuing and increasing effort to enable Cuba to stand on its own feet and consolidate the "socialist" gains under Castro.

The European satellite radios have by and large echoed Moscow's line, on occasion reiterating that Cuba does not stand alone (as in the Prague RUDE PRAVO's comment that Cuba "is not defenseless, powerless, and without reliable friends") and on occasion scoffing at reports of a Soviet military buildup. RUDE PRAVO goes beyond Moscow in ridiculing not only the notion that there are large numbers of soldiers in Cuba but rumors that there are "regiments from Czechoslovakia, volunteers from China, and so forth."

East German media, characteristically less circumspect than Moscow in brandishing Soviet military strength, mention the power of Soviet rockets in the context of Cuba: Branding as nonsense the idea that the USSR is occupying Cuba, a 3 September East German domestic service broadcast declared that the USSR does not need military bases; it has global rockets which can "smash from its own territory any aggressor, wherever he may be."

For the most part, however, satellite comment simply sets out to document the charge that Cuba is threatened, and does not play up Soviet military aid.

Chinese Communist media, which have railed -- like Moscow -- against "piratical" U.S. military "provocations" against Cuba, reported the Soviet-Cuban communique without comment. Rather than advertising Soviet help and support for Cuba, Peking propaganda has focused on the sympathy and support of "the Chinese people." Deputy Premier Chen I, for example,

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declared on 1 September that "the Chinese people will always stand by the Cuban people, firmly supporting them in their patriotic and just struggle against U.S. imperialism." He emphasized the "friendly relations" between Cuba and the CPR and the "militant" nature of this friendship. On 27 August, Peking reported that national organizations of Chinese workers, students, youth, and women had sent cables to their Cuban counterparts condemning the shelling of Havana and pledging "firm support to the Cuban people in their struggle against U.S. aggression." Peking also quoted from an editorial in the Cuban Communist paper HOY (entitled "Free Cuba Knows How to Defend Itself") the statement that "We [Cubans] have arms for defense and we have the ability, will, and courage to use these arms."

North Korea's news agency KCNA on 4 September reported a pro-Cuba rally at which the Cuban ambassador noted that the Soviet Union had pledged its "readiness" to comply with the request for "necessary armaments." North Vietnam's party organ NHAN DAN on 6 September winds up a commentary entitled "Yankees, Hands Off Cuba" with a characteristically vague assertion that "the brother Cuban people are not alone: if the U.S. warmongers keep on blindly invading Cuba, progressive mankind will side with her."

III. YUGOSLAVIA

Radio Belgrade confines its attention to Moscow and Washington reports on the Soviet announcement that it would extend military aid to Cuba. It cites the U.S. State Department's statement that the Soviet decision "only confirms the practice in force for several months," and observes that in Washington "one gets the impression that neither official nor political circles expected such a document." The radio says that some unofficial sources in Washington feel that present Soviet military aid will be considerably strengthened, and that "soon deliveries of the most modern equipment for the Cuban armed forces can be expected." According to American estimates, states Belgrade, more than 2,000 Soviet military experts are now in Cuba; and some stress has been put on the fact that Soviet military deliveries "were stepped up beginning in July immediately after Raul Castro's arrival in Moscow."

IV. NONCOMMUNIST COUNTRIES

A. Latin America

Costa Rica: The Dominican Republic's Santo Domingo radio reports that hundreds of students from seminaries and colleges in San Jose, Costa Rican capital, several days ago engaged in a number of street demonstrations against Soviet military aid to Cuba. They marched to the presidential palace where they were read a message from President Francisco Orlich declaring sympathy for the demonstration and assuring them that Costa Rica "will act in an energetic manner against Soviet intervention in the heart of the continent." Radio Santo Domingo also reports the Costa Rican Foreign Minister as saying that his nation is fully aware of the danger that Soviet infiltration in Cuba represents and of the need to take measures to restrain it.

Haiti: In a statement over the Santo Domingo radio, the Haitian National Democratic Union quotes an unidentified Miami newspaper for the statement that Soviet agents "are working within the Government of Haiti in intimate collaboration with the communists for the purpose of installing on that island advance stations of electronic equipment to be used to interfere with the guided missiles launched by the United States."

Panama: A commentary over Panama City's Radio Mia warns that Cuba has become a Soviet military base "deep in the heart of the Americas" and that "we must prepare ourselves with all our resources to face this threat to our liberty, our way of life -- this imminent danger which, if not checked in time, will destroy us all." The commentator declares: "Dozens of ships are steaming their way to the Caribbean island laden with arms and with technicians who could very well be soldiers, and in the heart of our democracy missile bases are being established. Cuba is a base of aggression against the democratic nations of America."

Guatemala: The Guatemalan Foreign Minister, according to the Quetzaltenango radio, stated that a meeting of OAS foreign ministers is urgently necessary "for adopting security measures provided in the Rio de Janeiro treaty against the threat posed by the arsenal installed in the island of Cuba by the Soviet Union."

B. West Europe

Britain: In a review of British press comment on the subject, the BBC's general overseas service quotes the TIMES as pointing out that Russia's commitment to Cuba is now "more and more open and confident," as it had become necessary for the Soviet Union to "make a great effort" to help Cuba and "renew its influence in Latin America." The size of the effort and

the tone in which Soviet aid was announced indicate a purpose "beyond the mere defense of the island," observes the TIMES, adding: "Although for Castro the main need may be to buttress his power, for Mr. Khrushchev the horizon is probably wider. He is presenting the United States with another problem implementing domestic discord, which can only harm President Kennedy, who is coming under increasing pressure to mount a full-scale invasion."

The GUARDIAN says the Soviet Government's motives are "ambiguous," and that the State Department seems to be aware of this. It suggests that Moscow has either yielded something to the anxious pleas of Castro for help, or it "wishes to use the presence of Soviet experts in Cuba as a lever to get the Americans out of Berlin or South Vietnam." However, what is certain is that Moscow "has avoided an absolute commitment for the defense of Cuba." The DAILY MAIL thinks Castro might yet find the remedy worse than the disease. "He might find, like others before him," says the newspaper, "that to ask support from a foreign power is to invite into the nest a cuckoo which will one day push him out." The DAILY TELEGRAPH declares bluntly: "Communism has now gained a foothold in the Western Hemisphere, and to try to dislodge it by force could only make matters far worse. President Kennedy should not be deflected from his policy of offering Latin America the constructive democratic alternative to the alien regimentation that the Russians will bring to Cuba."

Switzerland: In a commentary over Bern's international service, Bernard Beguin says Washington must face the fact that European opinion is far less impressed by the Castro doings than is the U.S. Congress. The regime of Fidel Castro is "merely a consequence of the abuses of power under the former regime." The commentator points to "the readiness of secret service agents of Washington to believe the rash statements of the Cuban immigrants in Florida," but admits that there is one question which preoccupies Europe as it does America -- whether or not Cuba is becoming a Soviet military base in the Western Hemisphere. If it is, then coexistence of the two great nuclear powers "would be just as endangered as it would have been if in 1956 Hungary had become an American base, for there are dangers which no great power can afford to tolerate in its zone of interest." Europe, in its estimation of this danger, "does not share the excitement of the United States," declares the commentator. "It is unlikely that Moscow intends to run too great a risk in a region where time is in any case working for communist subversion, and where it would be impossible to provoke a military trial of strength without starting a world conflict. The Soviet leaders know perfectly well what they can afford to risk. That is why President Kennedy is quite right in judging the situation calmly."

C. Asia and the Far East

South Vietnam: The Saigon Vietnamese-language newspaper CACH MANG QUOC GIA wonders whether Cuba, by showing a provocative attitude toward the United States, wants to create a situation favorable for the Soviet Union to carry out a "dark scheme" in the Western Hemisphere. The daily believes that for its own security and that of the Western Hemisphere, the United States will be compelled to take decisive action against Cuba. The Chinese-language YUAN TUNG JIH PAO shows concern over a report that more than 10,000 Soviet, Communist Chinese, and Czechoslovak troops had landed in Cuba and that the Soviet Union had openly announced its decision to send arms and experts to Cuba. "This indicates," says the newspaper, "that the situation in Cuba has become more and more tense and that Moscow is determined to use Cuba as a base for infiltration and aggression in the Western Hemisphere." Meanwhile THANH CONG JIH PAO, also Chinese and also published in Saigon, declares that the USSR, in admitting that it will deliver arms and send experts to Cuba, has "openly challenged" the United States to keep its hands off Cuba. The daily, noting that the United States "until now has shown no reaction" to the Soviet move, terms this attitude "cowardly."